

Plant Organizing in Detroit

Recently many workers have asked how can the science of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought be used in plant organizing? How can we apply the strategy and tactics of proletarian revolution to our daily work? For answers to these questions we can look to both J.V. Stalin and Mao Tsetung. Comrade Marshal Joseph Stalin stated: "Strategy deals with the main forces of the revolution and their reserves.", and further, "While the object of strategy is to win the war against... the bourgeoisie, to carry through the struggle against... the bourgeoisie to its end, tactics pursue less important objects, for their aim is not the winning of the war as a whole, but the winning of some particular engagements or particular battles..." (1) And, regarding political motion, Comrade Mao Tsetung pointed out: "The masses in any given place are generally composed of three parts, the relatively active, the intermediate and the relatively backward. The leaders must therefore be skilled in uniting the small number of active elements around the leadership and must rely on them to raise the level of the intermediate elements and to win over the backward elements." (2) Both of these statements represent the summation of years of experience in the class struggle and can be used to illuminate our organizing path.

In considering one of the major auto plants in Detroit, Dodge Main, the first step necessarily was to carefully analyse the objective and subjective conditions of this particular plant. We see that in the plant there are production workers, upgraders (those unskilled workers attempting to become skilled workers), part time upgraders, apprentices, and Journeymen; all of which represent various imperialist gradations between so-called skilled and unskilled proletarians. Journeymen and upgraders who are usually Anglo-Americans are both considered to be skilled tradesmen—the upgraders finishing their education and the journeymen who have supposedly completed their skilled tradesmen education. These different job classifications and the material base of pay that accompanies them provide the basis for the divide and rule tactics of the imperialists. Further, the monopoly capitalist class uses nationalities, men and women, employed or unemployed, domestic or foreign, etc. as distinctions to divide the work force and prevent a joint struggle against capital from being mounted.

The struggle between the bribed, skilled proletarians and the unskilled proletarians

is vicious. It sees the Journeymen and upgraders on one hand, opposed to the unskilled point of production workers. The skilled workers are almost entirely Anglo-Americans while the unskilled workers (who represent the vast majority in the plant) are primarily Negro national minority and other various oppressed national minorities. What this represents is that those workers from the imperialist nations (i.e., the U.S.) are favored over those workers from the oppressed nations. The capitalists throw "favors" to the workers from the imperialist nations (over for instance workers from oppressed nations such as Puerto Rico or the Negro Nation) in order to accelerate class division and prevent revolution. Concrete examples of this are as follows. When there's an unemployment crisis the national minorities if hired at all are hired after Anglo-American workers. Those who do get hired can always be sure they'll be in the front ranks of those who get laid-off. Thus, the age old proverb of the oppressed Negro people depicting white chauvinism, "Negro people are the last to be hired and the first to be fired, or White is right, Black step back."

Here's another example of how class divisions are accelerated. The statement "the more repulsive the work, the lower the wages" of K. Marx and F. Engels in the Manifesto of the Communist Party, is indicative of working conditions at the point of production which is concentrated at Dodge Main with Negro national minority workers. These workers stand in direct opposition to the upgraders. The production workers, after a period of time, are allowed to take a plant examination to become an upgrader whose aim is to become a Journeyman. However, as was pointed out earlier, the majority of the upgraders are Anglo-American, while the majority of production workers remain Negro national minority workers. The white chauvinism in this plant is obvious to all.

The chances for a Negro national minority worker to ever become a Journeyman are about as good as those of a man going into battle with his hands tied behind his back. The imperialist paid, white chauvinist employers use several methods to keep national minorities, but Negro national minority workers in this plant in particular, from advancing. They will hire an "experienced" Journeyman, or transfer, fire and rehire a Journeyman. Or, they'll lay off the potential and imminent Negro national minority Journeyman, thereby preventing him from accumulating the needed hours and letting an Anglo-American surpass him

in hours to get the job aimed at, or, as indicated in the first method, by putting a Journeyman from elsewhere in the expected and anticipated position of Journeyman. This type of suspended "limbo" is perpetrated continually for "undesirables" and national minorities. One worker who is an Arc Welder at Dodge Main, a sub-division in the largest union local of Chrysler, has been on the waiting list of upgraders for years. And, like so many others, he is as skilled as they come, but has never been allowed to become a Journeyman because of the white chauvinist policies that exist at this plant. He is compelled to work as part time upgrader, repeatedly doing acetylene torch work while cutting pieces of metal other than arc welding on automobiles, as his upgrading aspirations and classification called for. Yet, chances are he will never become a Journeyman.

There are also contradictions in the plant posed by the presence of the apprentices. The apprentices immediate aim, like that of the upgraders, is to become a Journeyman. Again, apprentices are predominantly Anglo-Americans. Although they are initially paid less than the upgraders, because of their being sent to skilled tradesman school "free of charge" by the company, their "superior" education to the upgraders propels them to a speedier advancement to Journeyman, and they automatically, on the way up, begin to receive a higher wage than the upgraders. Thus we see, there is a continuous struggle between the skilled and unskilled tradesman, from Journeyman to production worker and all the varying degrees in between.

It is the production workers, excluding the Journeymen of course, especially those with the hottest, dirtiest and hardest jobs, who are continually attacked by the capitalist system of agents, union class collaborators, and company policies. A specific example of this is the recent counter-revolutionary bargain struck between the Dodge Main capitalists and the UAW (United Auto Workers) to cut the wages of all job setters (national composition 50-50) and for the Rod and Cap department (national composition 99% Negro national minority). Further, the capitalist dogs and their puppets continually dangle the carrot before the most oppressed workers, especially the Negro national minority, encouraging them to drive full speed into a dead end street. For example they take a part-time upgrader, whose aim is to become a Journeyman, "let" him work overtime on weekends and train him to do skilled

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labor without the pay which should accompany the work. He most likely will never attain "official" Journeyman status, particularly if he is a national minority. These workers are led on with the promise of "times will be better for you soon". This is nothing but wholesale exploitation and more and more profits for the capitalists!

The imperialists justify this type of economic exploitation by saying "We are letting you work because we know you need the money; we are actually doing you a favor until you are able to make the grade of Journeyman." This white chauvinist attitude of the fascists is common in all the plants. However, it is precisely this type of severe economic exploitation and oppression that prepares the Negro national minority proletariat for the revolutionary struggle.

Thus we see that the Journeyman section, like the union misleaders is the counter-revolutionary antithesis of the proletariat at the point of production, the majority of which at this plant are Negro national minority. Not only are the Journeymen linked to the capitalists through the material benefits they receive, they are also most closely linked in ideology, for among the skilled workers, anti-communism, white chauvinism, pornography and reformism are the main ideologies.

On the other hand, we see that the reformism of the CPUSA and the UAW has called forth disgust and disappointment among the most exploited and oppressed. But, their rebellion against reformism has been manifested in the spontaneous, disjointed struggles of the anarchists and syndicalist groupings which spring from their ranks.

Taking into account that our strategy is to build a multi-national, Marxist-Leninist political party of the proletariat and that our tactical path is to the most exploited and oppressed workers we turned

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"If Europe and America may be called the front, the scene of the main engagements between socialism and imperialism, the non-sovereign nations and the colonies, with their raw materials, fuel, food and vast store of human material, should be regarded as the rear, the reserve of imperialism. In order to win a war one must not only triumph at the front but also revolutionise the enemy's rear, his reserves. Hence the victory of the world proletarian revolution may be regarded as assured only if the proletariat is able to combine its own revolutionary struggle with the movement for emancipation of the toiling masses of the non-sovereign nations and the colonies against the power of the imperialists and for a dictatorship of the proletariat." (Stalin, J.V., Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1936, p. 114-115)

It is evident that the key to socialism and an end to all exploitation and oppression in the Anglo-American nation lies in our ability to unite with the revolutionary National Liberation struggles throughout the colonial world (in particular Latin America) our ability to fight to the end for the Independence of the Negro Nation and Puerto Rico; Regional Autonomy for the Southwest; and for full equality for all national minorities in the Anglo-American nation.

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again to the summation of years of class struggle, that celebrated and classical work, The Foundations of Leninism by J.V. Stalin. "Theory is the experience of the working class movement in all countries taken in its general aspect. Of course, theory becomes purposeless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice, just as practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illuminated by revolutionary theory. But theory can become a tremendous force in the working-class movement if it is built up in indissoluble connection with revolutionary practice; for theory, and theory alone, can give the movement confidence, the power of orientation, and an understanding of the inner relation of surrounding events; for it, and it alone, can help practice to realize not only how and in which direction classes are moving at the present time, but also how and in which direction they will have to move in the near future. None other than Lenin uttered and repeated scores of times the well known thesis that: 'Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.'" (3)

Taking into account this and the other above quoted passages it was clear to us that the relatively active are the production workers, the intermediate are the upgraders and the relatively backward are the Journeymen, looking at the plant as a whole. It is up to our nucleus to be skilled at mobilizing, organizing and transforming the counter-revolutionary subjective and objective social motion of the plant into its revolutionary opposite by organizing first the most oppressed and exploited of the unskilled production forces. By trying to win over the most advanced (with the aid of our paper, the People's Tribune) and relying on them to raise the level of the intermediate, and finally, either winning over or isolating the backward elements, the Journeymen.

Secondly, we must struggle to overcome the anarchist and syndicalist motions within the most exploited and oppressed by putting forward and fighting for the theories of Marxism-Leninism. Building an independent, multi-national, communist party can only be done by rallying collectives of workers around the line of Leninism.

Concerning the question of main blow, we cannot ignore the fact that the main revolutionary movement within the proletariat in the U.S. state today is the struggle of the Negro and Puerto Rican nations for independence, the struggle of the national minorities for equality and the struggle of the Mexican national minority for Regional Autonomy in the Southwest. Therefore, the injection of theory concerning the national question in particular, is of prime, strategic importance in our work. Tactically, the move to unite the most oppressed and exploited sections of the Dodge Main plant is a move toward the Negro and other national minority workers. We must firmly oppose the bourgeois metaphysics of racism on the national question and build working class unity. Therefore, we plan not only to develop the tactical programs of exposing the UAW mis-leaders, fighting for the job rights of the workers, and democracy and equality for all workers, but, to begin to train and educate the broad masses of these workers in the strategy and tactics of Leninism, of revolution, as this is the key to their liberation and to socialism. Our starting point is the national colonial question in general, and the Negro National Colonial question in particular at the Dodge Main plant.

- 1) The Foundations of Leninism, J.V. Stalin, FLP, Peking 1970, p. 86.
- 2) Mao Tsetung, Selected Readings, FLP, Peking 1971, pp. 288-289.
- 3) Foundations of Leninism, J.V. Stalin, FLP, Peking 1970, p. 22.